



**Aspira, Inc.  
of New Jersey**

**Annual Report**

**July 1, 1986 to  
June 30, 1987**

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

**G**reetings to all of Aspira's friends and supporters. May the New Year bring you all the happiness possible and the good health to enjoy it.

The excitement is building at Aspira as we enter the threshold of our 20th anniversary in 1988. As we reflect on two decades of service and leadership development in New Jersey we can proudly present those successful alumni who have emerged from this movement and the 24,000 young people whose lives were touched by our intervention.

As the oldest Hispanic organization in New Jersey, Aspira stands as an institution with deep roots in communities throughout the state. Operating from a storefront office on Branford Place in Newark in 1968, Aspira began an aggressive effort to reach out to generations of young Latinos with "Leadership Through Education" as its mission.

Since those humble beginnings, Aspira has expanded its services to the counties of Hudson and Passaic. During this past year Aspira was able to secure funding to open centers in the counties of Camden and Mercer with the assistance of alumni and long-time supporters of the organization.

Today, Aspira's services range from career exploration with fifth graders to college counseling with high school seniors; support counseling for the high school dropout to advocacy for the medical school applicant. The Aspira Club, which was the foundation for leadership training of the Aspirantes, has multiplied throughout the communities we serve and has been configured to include the Aspira Youth Congress, which is the statewide network for the clubs and the coordinating body for the Aspirantes' public policy agenda.

The first twenty years demonstrated that Aspira's services were critically needed. As a statewide organization, Aspira will have to continue its expansion effort, for there are many communities with Latino youth in dire need of our services.

As an advocacy organization, Aspira will continue to seek equity for the disadvantaged youth in our community at large and to educate the larger community on the viability of Hispanics as productive citizens in the state.

We hope all of you will join the celebration of Aspira's accomplishments in this coming year. Those of you who have been long-time supporters of Aspira played a vital role in our success. Your participation in the celebration is highly regarded. Those of you who are just becoming familiar with Aspira will have an opportunity to join efforts for the future.

Aspira is and continues to be a worthwhile investment as it seeks to prepare the future leaders of our society. As the Executive Director, it has been my privilege to serve at the helm of an organization which changed the course of my destiny as a youngster and so many others that followed me. I am therefore asking for your continued support in dollars, time and commitment to ensure that Aspira will be there for future generations to come. PALANTE!!!!!!!!

*Maria Vizcarrondo-DeSoto*

Maria Vizcarrondo-DeSoto  
Executive Director  
May 1987



Maria Vizcarrondo-DeSoto, Aspira's Executive Director

## INTRODUCTION

**F**ounded in 1968 in Newark, Aspira, Inc. of New Jersey is a non-profit, self-help agency which seeks to reverse the extreme dropout rate of Hispanic students and to improve the poverty-ridden socioeconomic conditions that face the Hispanic community. Aspira promotes educational achievement and leadership development among Latino youth.

Aspira, Inc. of New Jersey is an associate of the Aspira National Association, Inc. In addition to Aspira, Inc. of New Jersey, Aspira associates are located in New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Florida and Puerto Rico. During 1986, the national headquarters moved to Washington, D.C.

## Background

Lack of education, in Aspira's viewpoint, is the most destructive problem facing the Hispanic community. On a national basis, only 47.9 percent of Hispanics complete high school and the dropout rate for Hispanics is three times higher than for Whites (non-Hispanic) and one and one half times higher than for Blacks. Not only do more Hispanic students drop out of high school than do members of other groups, but they drop out earlier. Forty percent drop out by their sophomore year.

Here in New Jersey, the dropout rate for Hispanic students is more than sixty percent and the college attendance rate for those who do graduate is abysmally low. One of the psychological barriers facing the Hispanic student is the lack of role models in the educational process. Only a minuscule portion of the state's teachers, administrators and support staff are of Spanish origin. Aspira seeks to fill such voids by teaching Hispanic children that the way out of poverty is through education.

Trapped by low self esteem and by just surviving in the poorest economic conditions imaginable, the Hispanic student finds educational refuge in the form of Aspira's counseling, workshops, field trips, conferences and clubs. Most of the students that Aspira serves come from poverty-stricken homes.

"Aspira" is the Spanish word for aspire. Its student participants are known as "Aspirantes" and come from the ranks of the undirected and non-achievers, as well as the academically talented.

During its 19-year history, Aspira, Inc. of New Jersey has provided assistance to more than 24,000 youths and has been instrumental in placing 4,700 students in post-secondary institutions, including leading colleges and universities of medicine, business, education and the social sciences. Aspira, Inc. of New Jersey boasts a ninety-five percent success rate for dropout prevention among program participants.

In the year ending June 30, 1987, Aspira served 2,557 students: 1,109 on an ongoing basis and 1,448 through conferences, workshops, educational field trips and other activities. Approximately 300 students were placed in post-secondary institutions as a result of the services offered at Aspira's Hudson, Passaic, and Essex County offices. Following are highlights from the 1986-87 program year.



Formal and informal counseling services play an important role in encouraging students to excel in school.

## COLLEGE AND CAREER AWARENESS

During the program year July 1, 1986 - June 30, 1987, Aspira organized five agency-wide major conferences to enrich student awareness of career and college opportunities.

Aspira works with schools, colleges and universities with a twofold purpose - first, to place students in institutions of higher learning and second, to increase institutional awareness of the challenge and opportunities that Hispanic youth represent. Agency-wide conferences involve students from the counties served by Aspira during the 1986-1987 fiscal year: Hudson, Passaic and Essex.

To ensure that English as a Second Language (ESL) high school students understand the college admissions process, a bilingual mini-college fair was conducted at Barringer High School in conjunction with the Leadership Development Unit. The fair was attended by more than 80 students who, because of language barriers, otherwise may not have become aware of the educational resources available to them. The participating colleges were Rutgers University, Montclair State College, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Jersey City State College, Essex County College and Kean College.

William Paterson College in Wayne was the site for Aspira's Annual Health Careers Conference. More than 250 high school students were exposed to a wide scope of medical career opportunities. Professionals from various aspects of medicine and professors from the college talked with the students about such diverse options as nursing, alcohol health research, obstetrics and even acupuncture!

Sincere interest in medicine was also displayed by 50 college students who attended the Medical School Conference held at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), Newark. Dr. Richard DeJesus, Coordinator of Minority Affairs, School of Osteopathic Medicine, directed the conference. Students were told what it is like to be in medical school, how to prepare, how to get in, and how to find financing.

Aspira's 10th Annual Career Day Conference, sponsored and hosted by Jersey City State College, was the largest "career" event of the year, with an all-time attendance record of 300 students. Workshops directed by Hispanic role models were given in law, health, engineering, education, career planning, journalism and theater. Following the workshops, 25 colleges and universities dispensed information and answered students' questions at a college fair.

At the daylong college and career fair held at the Meadowlands Complex, students spent the first portion of

the day being introduced to various colleges, and later participated in workshops on SAT score improvement, the college admission process, financial aid, resume writing, drug education, and planned parenthood.



Aspira's Youth Congress Conference, held at Passaic County Community College, focused on issues that impact Hispanic youth.

## LEADERSHIP THROUGH EDUCATION

### Aspira Clubs

**A**spira's mission of leadership through education is well served by its student-operated, agency-wide network of Aspira clubs. The clubs promote the ideals of community service and citizenship and provide students with an organizational structure from which they can learn effective problem-solving methods.

Through the Aspira clubs, information on agency programs such as SAT review courses, financial aid workshops and college trips is disseminated. The clubs function directly out of high schools and community centers and are guided by an Aspira counselor/club facilitator who assists the clubs in setting goals and objectives.

Each Aspira club holds its own activities and fundraisers, and uses the funds it raises as it deems appropriate. This year's fundraising events included candy sales, flower sales, dances and talent shows. Some Aspira clubs bought Aspira club coats, others used their money to buy food for the needy, and a few of the clubs increased the size of their savings accounts for use the following year.

Aspira club meetings were held three to four times monthly at the following schools:

#### Hudson County

Ferris High School  
Hoboken High School

#### Passaic County

John F. Kennedy High School  
Eastside High School  
Passaic High School

#### Essex County

Barringer High School  
Barringer Preparatory  
East Side High School  
Our Lady of Good Counsel

### Youth Congress

Each Aspira club selects from its ranks a member to represent it in the Aspira Youth Congress, the statewide network of all the Aspira clubs. The 1986-87 program year represents the second anniversary of the Youth Congress and it is doing quite well. Through the Youth Congress, students are taught parliamentary procedure and leadership skills.

#### Activities

The Youth Congress members played a critical role in implementing various activities, including an agency-wide masquerade ball and the Three Kings Day (Epiphany) celebration. However, the Congress' largest undertaking of

the year was the Second Annual Youth Congress Conference held at Passaic County Community College. In his keynote address, the Hon. Robert Menendez, Mayor of Union City and the first Hispanic to hold a mayoral position in the State of New Jersey, applauded the Aspirantes for striving toward educational excellence and "inspiring pride in the Hispanic community."

The Youth Congress students, under the guidance of Aspira staff, did all of the work necessary to hold a successful conference. The Aspirantes enlisted assistance from numerous experts to serve as panelists and moderators for workshops and discussion groups which addressed issues that impact on Hispanic youth - drug education, parent/student relations, bilingual education, sex education and the dropout problem.



Princeton Educational Center in Blairstown offers a rural setting where youth learn teamwork by participating in various outdoor activities including rappelling.

### Public Policy Program

In New Jersey, as well as throughout the United States, the number of Hispanics in public policy positions is far below what would be representative of Hispanics in the general population. This emphasizes the importance of Aspira's Public Policy Program. The program is funded by a grant made to Aspira's National Association from The Ford Foundation. Its purpose is to nurture the leadership potential of Hispanic youth. The select group of students who are involved are Youth Congress members.

## CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

During phase one, 15 students received instruction on the complexities of policy development, and became familiar with the leadership and issues affecting their communities. During phase two, five students worked as interns with local role models who hold public policy leadership positions. The students worked at the Newark Board of Education, Mayor Sharpe James' office, a freeholder's office, a councilman's office, and at Essex County College with a Trustee.

During the last phase, an outstanding individual chosen from the five local interns was selected for a national internship. Anibal Lopez, a junior at Barringer Prep, Newark, was selected and worked at The Washington Post. During his six-week stay, Anibal received a first-hand look at policy-making on the national level. Anibal's future plans include college and a career in international politics.



Public Policy Program graduates, Washington, D.C. The purpose of the Public Policy Program is to nurture the leadership potential of Hispanic youth.

Utilizing music as a conduit, Aspira conveyed an important dual message, "stay in school/keep off drugs." The occasion was a "Youth Jam" concert held in Branch Brook Park, Newark, sponsored in conjunction with the Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs. More than 2,000 parents and students attended the event, and all enjoyed the sounds offered by local Hispanic musicians. The Essex County Sheriff's Department put forth a strong effort in conveying the "keep off drugs" message by distributing anti-drug literature, directing a "keep off drugs" panel and question and answer session that explained the dangers of drug use.

Aspirantes, in conjunction with the Boys Club of Newark, helped needy families celebrate Three Kings Day, the traditional Hispanic holiday which celebrates the birth of Christ. The Aspirantes provided children with gifts that had been collected diligently throughout the year, and distributed food baskets to the parents. More than 600 family members participated in the festivities.

Aspira maintained a high profile during the Annual New Jersey Statewide Puerto Rican Day Parade. More than 150 Aspirantes and their parents celebrated the day dedicated to their ethnic heritage. AT&T donated T-shirts emblazoned with the Aspira logo, and the materials for an award-winning float.



Aspirantes prepare for the Puerto Rican Day Parade.

## CENTER HIGHLIGHTS

**A**spira maintains three centers, located in Essex, Hudson and Passaic Counties. Although the centers work closely together in planning and implementing various agency-wide activities, each brings something distinctively special to the result of the agency's efforts as a whole.

We are happy to report that during our most recently completed program year, great strides were made in obtaining funding for the support of two, **yes two**, new Aspira centers which will be located in Camden and Trenton. This increases the number of Aspira centers in New Jersey to five! Special thanks to the friends of Aspira and contributors who made it possible.

### Passaic County

The city of Paterson in Passaic County is the home base for Aspira's Talent Search Unit. The purpose of the program is to assist low-income, first generation college bound students in enrolling in a post-secondary institution.

Counselors at John F. Kennedy High School, Eastside High School and Passaic High School worked closely with students, parents and teachers to motivate the students to graduate or earn a GED. The services provided were educational counseling, financial aid information workshops, field trips, actual placement into colleges and universities, and activities tied to the Aspira clubs program.

Kean College was the site for Aspira's first field trip for ESL students. All presentations were made in Spanish, and the students were informed about curriculum programs that address the needs presented by their language barriers.

A trip to DeVry Institute introduced students to the expanding world of technical careers. Instructors from the Institute conversed with the students and answered questions about the future of computer programming opportunities and electronics in general. Passaic County's Talent Search Unit also organized trips to Rutgers University, Cook College, Kean College and Passaic County Community College.

### Essex County

The focus of much of the activity at Aspira's Essex County office is the Leadership Development Program. The primary purpose of the program is positive image building.

By utilizing creative means to motivate students and stressing participation in the Aspira clubs, Essex counselors guide students to complete their junior and senior high school educations, and go on to college.

One such motivational activity was the formation of an Aspira Dance Troupe by students at Barringer High School in Newark. The dance troupe not only promotes cultural awareness, but serves as a recruitment tool. The dance troupe performed at various activities throughout the year.

The opportunity to obtain a valuable summer experience motivated 50 students to attend a field trip to AT&T headquarters in Basking Ridge where the Aspirantes were exposed to the telecommunications field from a corporate perspective. Those students who wished to participate in the company's internship program experienced all steps of the formal interview process. AT&T provided bus transportation for the 11 students selected for the summer jobs program.

In addition to their work responsibilities, the students utilized AT&T's equipment and expertise to develop an AT&T video on Aspira's Summer Internship experience with the company. Perhaps one of these young Aspirantes will someday win an Academy Award!

### Hudson County

One of the main programs at the Hudson County center is Aspira's Health Careers Program, which is also offered at other Aspira centers. The program is mandated to direct students in careers in medicine, dentistry, optometry, public health veterinary and graduate schools of health-related fields.

Services at the Hudson office include educational counseling, workshops, field trips, college placement and the Aspira clubs program. The counselor from the Hudson County office worked closely with students from Ferris High School in Jersey City and Hoboken High School in Hoboken. Students participated in all agency-wide activities, including the Health Careers Conference at William Paterson College and the Medical Conference held at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, Newark.

Aspira is proud of the many students it has assisted in earning graduate medical degrees, but is also cognizant that medical careers don't begin and end with doctoral status. During the 1986-87 program year, the Hudson Center organized a number of activities to expose students to allied health, which encompasses the technical and medical support professions such as nursing, radiology (X-ray), blood technician and dental hygiene technician.

During a trip to the Philadelphia College of Nursing, students learned of the responsibilities and rewards of nursing and the various two- and four-year programs available. Health

## COMMUNITY REPORT

Orientation Day, held at UMDNJ, Newark, was also geared toward allied health education opportunities. The Aspirantes spent the day touring the medical school facilities and speaking with professors; and were offered an Emergency Medical Technician demonstration.

Unemployment among youth is a national problem, and part-time jobs can play an important role in addressing a college student's financial needs. Aspirantes from Hudson responded to "dress for success" and resume workshops that taught students the skills necessary to obtain that all-important first job.



Aspira's Health Career Program exposes students to the vast opportunities in the health care industry.

Aspira's Annual Luncheon is always a "happening" and our Historic 10th was no exception. More than 325 community, corporate and political officers from the city of Newark and surrounding areas attended the luncheon, which was Aspira's largest to date.

The luncheons lend our corporate and community sponsors and friends the opportunity to hear up-to-date reports on agency programs, meet one another, and more importantly, meet outstanding examples of those who represent the reason for Aspira's existence – the student Aspirantes.

Rita DiMartino, managing director, Caribbean and Central America, AT&T, gave an outstanding keynote address which focused on the importance of partnerships between corporations and community organizations. "Corporations," said DiMartino, "must do all that they can to improve the economic condition and future of our cities and our youth."

Rafael Valentin, Chairperson of Aspira, asserted that, "Corporate, business and individual support is more important today when we observe the trends of government funds away from cities."

Aspira extends much thanks to Anheuser-Busch for once again co-sponsoring the luncheon.



**Aspira, Inc. of New Jersey**  
**Statement of Support, Revenue, Expenses and Changes in Fund Balances**  
**Year Ended June 30, 1987**

	Current Funds			
	Unrestricted	Restricted	Fixed asset fund	Total all funds
Public Support, Grants and Revenue:				
Corporations and foundations	\$ 83,763	\$ 52,976	---	\$ 136,739
Government grants	10,000	123,416	---	133,416
Transfers from Aspira of America, Inc. (Note 4)	---	93,568	---	93,568
Community, including United Way	24,894	66,730	---	91,624
Miscellaneous	3,556	---	---	3,556
Transfers of administrative overhead	15,403	(15,403)	---	---
Total public support, grants and revenue	137,616	321,287	---	458,903
Expenses:				
Program Services:				
Health career opportunities	---	77,578	---	77,578
Business career	12,863	43,884	---	56,747
Other career and educational counseling	42,179	201,745	---	243,924
Total program services	55,042	323,207	---	378,249
Supporting Services:				
Management and general	70,180	---	6,218	76,398
Fund raising	12,775	---	---	12,775
Total supporting services	82,955	---	6,218	89,173
Total expenses	137,997	323,207	6,218	467,422
Excess of expenses over public support, grants and revenue	(381)	(1,920)	(6,218)	(8,519)
Transfers from (to) other funds	(5,091)	2,441	2,650	---
Fund balances, beginning of period	66,367	705	5,891	72,963
Fund balances, end of period	\$ 60,895	\$ 1,226	\$ 2,323	\$ 64,444

**Aspira, Inc. of New Jersey**  
**Statement of Functional Expenses**  
**Year Ended June 30, 1987**

	Program Services				Supporting Services			
	Health career opportunities	Business career	Other career and educational counseling	Total	Management and general	Fund raising	Total	Total expenses
Salaries	\$ 59,672	\$ 23,124	\$ 144,609	\$ 227,405	\$ 29,809	\$ 6,646	\$ 36,455	\$ 263,860
Payroll taxes and fringe benefits	9,273	5,583	30,636	45,492	8,773	1,929	10,702	56,194
Total salaries and related costs	68,945	28,707	175,245	272,897	38,582	8,575	47,157	320,054
Board activities and meetings	---	---	---	---	1,594	---	1,594	1,594
Contributions and community support	---	---	---	---	863	---	863	863
Educational and program materials	1,199	2,236	1,685	5,120	---	---	---	5,120
Insurance	---	---	---	---	3,526	---	3,526	3,526
Occupancy, utilities and maintenance	2,247	7,014	16,955	26,216	6,644	738	7,382	33,598
Printing and publications	---	150	---	150	948	338	1,286	1,436
Professional fees and contractual services	800	6,376	5,546	12,722	5,733	2,602	8,335	21,057
Program activities, seminars and workshops	1,340	1,609	9,110	12,059	---	---	---	12,059
Student scholarships, stipends and fellowships	---	---	19,500	19,500	---	---	---	19,500
Supplies and equipment rental	1,573	4,875	4,853	11,301	4,090	399	4,489	15,790
Telephone and postage	1,162	4,359	7,645	13,166	5,600	123	5,723	18,889
Travel and meetings	100	93	3,005	3,198	3,713	---	3,713	6,911
Miscellaneous	---	---	---	---	(1,113)	---	(1,113)	(1,113)
Total expenses before depreciation and amortization	77,366	55,419	243,544	376,329	70,180	12,775	82,955	459,284
Depreciation and amortization	212	1,328	380	1,920	6,218	---	6,218	8,138
	\$ 77,578	\$ 56,747	\$ 243,924	\$ 378,249	\$ 76,398	\$ 12,775	\$ 89,173	\$ 467,422

## Agency Contributors and Community Funds

ASPIRA, A National Association	GMI	Passaic Board of Education
ASPIRA of Florida	HISPA	Passaic County Community College
ASPIRA of Illinois	Hispanic Association of Higher Education	Passaic High School - Paterson
ASPIRA of New York	Hispanic Bar Association	Paterson Alumni Association
ASPIRA of Pennsylvania	Hoboken Board of Education	Paterson Board of Education
ASPIRA of Puerto Rico	Hoboken High School	Paterson Community Civic Organization
Barringer High School	Hudson County Community College	Picatinny Arsenal
Barringer Preparatory Jr. High School	International Ladies Garment Workers Union	Presidential Classroom for Young Americans
Bloomfield High School	International Union of Operating Engineers	Princeton Educational Center at Blairstown
Boricua Health Organization	Jersey City Board of Education	Princeton University
Broadway Jr. High School	Jersey City State College	Puerto Rican Congress of New Jersey
Caldwell College	John F. Kennedy High School - Paterson	Pyne Point Junior High School
Camden Board of Education	Junior High School #2	Rahway State Prison
Camden High School	Kean College of New Jersey	Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Channel 41 - SIN	La Casa de Don Pedro, Inc.	Seton Hall University
Connection Communication Corporation	McDonald's Paterson, Market Street	St. Peter's College
Dickinson High School	Matchbox Toy Limited	Stevens Institute of Technology
Department of Community Affairs,	Mercer County Community College	Stockton State College
State of New Jersey	Mercer County Hispanic Association	Technical Training Project
DeVry Technical Institute	Monmouth College	Trenton Board of Education
Division on Civil Rights, State of New Jersey	Montclair State College	Trenton Central High School
Dr. William H. Horton School	Mount Sinai Medical School	United Way of Essex and West Hudson
East Side High School - Newark	National Association of Hispanic Engineers	University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey
Eastside High School - Paterson	National Puerto Rican Coalition	Upsala College
Essex County College	Newark Board of Education	William Paterson College
Felician College	Newark Police Department	Woodrow Wilson High School
Franklin School	New Jersey Institute of Technology	
Glassboro State College	New Jersey Network	
Glassboro State College, Urban Center	Our Lady of Good Counsel High School	

## Corporations

Allied Signal	Edwards & Kelcey	Milton Can Company
Anheuser-Busch	First Fidelity Bank	Mobil Research & Development
Arrow Group Industries	First Jersey National Bank	Nabisco Brands, Inc.
AT&T	Goya Foods, Inc.	New Jersey Bell
Atlantic Industries	Hoffmann-LaRoche Inc.	Prudential Insurance Company of America
Bally's Park Place Casino	Howard Bank	Public Service Electric & Gas
Barton Press	Howmedica	Sandoz, Inc.
Bell Communications Research	Jersey Central Power & Light	Squibb
Broad National Bank	Johnson & Johnson	Supermarkets General Corporation
Broadway Bank & Trust Co.	Lenox, Inc.	The Gallup Organization
Ciba-Geigy	Matsumita Electric Corporation of America	The Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company
City National Bank	Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith, Inc.	
Crum & Forster	Midatlantic National Bank	

## Foundations and Trusts

Becton Dickinson Foundation	Leavens Foundation	The Pew Memorial Trust
Bunbury Company, Inc.	Merck Company Foundation	Turrell Fund
Max & Dora Cooper Family Foundation	Jay R. Monroe Memorial Foundation	Victoria Foundation, Inc.
Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation	Roxiticus Fund	Vincent & Ana Visceglia Foundation
Leighton & Carin Laughlin Trust	The Ford Foundation	

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**July 1986 - June 1987**

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